

Serial No.: 10/550,734
Atty. Docket No.: P70816US0

REMARKS

The Office Action mailed October 9, 2007, has been carefully reviewed and, by this Amendment, Applicants have amended claims 11-20 and added claims 21-24. Claims 11-24 are pending in the application. Claims 11, 22 and 23 are independent.

The Examiner rejected claims 11-14, 16-18 and 20 under 35 U.S.C. 102(a) as being anticipated by GB 2 377 177 to Bray, et al. ("Bray"). Under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the Examiner rejected claim 15 as being unpatentable over Bray in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,346,653 to Sessions et al., and rejected claim 19 as being unpatentable over Bray in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,998,509 to Nielsen.

As set forth in amended claim 11, the present invention is directed to a wound dressing including a web of gel-forming fibers or fibers soluble in wound exudates and a reinforcing layer attached to the web. The web has a density in the range of 5-60 g/m², and the reinforcing layer has a density in the range of 15-40 g/m². The resulting dressing is light in weight while still having sufficient strength so as to be easy to handle and remove in one piece (see page 3, lines 7-12 and lines 28-31). This is not shown or suggested by the prior art.

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Bray discloses a wound dressing having a layer of gel-forming fabric backed by a superabsorbent layer that provides reinforcement to the gel-forming fabric layer. As noted by the Examiner, Bray teaches a basis weight range for the gel-forming fabric layer of between 25 and 200 g/m², which includes a portion that overlaps with the claimed range for the web as set forth in claim 11. However, Bray's use of a superabsorbent layer to reinforce the gel-forming fabric layer necessitates that the superabsorbent layer have a density of at least 50 g/m², with the disclosed range going up to 350 g/m² (see page 1, lines 17-21). A density below 50 g/m² cannot be used without eliminating the superabsorbent capability of the superabsorbent layer, i.e., a density of less than 50 g/m² would fail to satisfy the high liquid-holding capacity requirements set forth for the Bray wound dressing (see page 2, lines 15-18). Hence, Bray teaches against a reinforcing layer having a low density in the range of 15-40 g/m², as is claimed by the present invention. Nor does Bray give any indication that would suggest to the skilled person that such a low density layer could be used. Therefore, the skilled person would not experiment with this low range of density, having no expectation of success in view of the structure taught by Bray and its required superabsorbency.

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For at least the foregoing reasons, claim 11 is patentable over the prior art. Favorable reconsideration and allowance thereof is requested.

New independent claim 22 is also in condition for allowance for the same reasons as claim 11, and further as claiming an even lower density range for the reinforcing layer. Claim 22 is supported in the specification on page 7, lines 14-16.

New independent claim 23 sets forth a wound dressing having an overall density of about 50 g/m², with "overall density" being defined as the sum of the densities of the web and the reinforcement layer (see page 3, lines 28-32). This is not shown or suggested by Bray for the reasons already discussed in connection with claim 11. Specifically, Bray discloses a gel-forming fabric layer having a density of between 25 and 200 g/m², in combination with a superabsorbent layer having a density of between 50 g/m² and 350 g/m². Therefore, even if the gel-forming fabric layer had a density as low as 25 g/m², the overall wound dressing density could still be no lower than 75 g/m², and most typically is much greater.

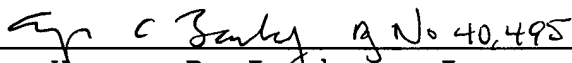
Claims 12-21 and 24 are also in condition for allowance as claims properly dependent on an allowable base claim and for the subject matter contained therein. New claims 21 and 24 are supported on page 3, lines 28-32.

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With this amendment and the foregoing remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any questions or comments, the Examiner is cordially invited to telephone the undersigned attorney so that the present application can receive an early Notice of Allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date: April 9, 2008
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